

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
December 9, 2020 at 2 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good afternoon. Today I'm reporting 553 new cases of COVID-19. There are 220 people in Toronto are in hospital with COVID-19 and 53 are in the ICU.
- Amongst the 553 reported cases today, 70% are spread comparatively evenly across four age groups:
 - 116 cases are amongst people aged 20 to 29.
 - 96 amongst those 30 to 39.
 - 80 amongst those 40 to 49; and
 - 99 cases are amongst those aged 50 to 59.
- Understandably there is a desire in many people to have more facts and data about COVID-19 in Toronto.
- Starting today, there will be new information on our COVID-19 dashboard about percent positivity for COVID-19 by age group.
- Percent positivity measures the proportion of individuals testing positive for COVID-19 out of the total number who have been tested.
- There are seven age group categories which we track.
- In the new data, you will see that percent positivity is highest in the category of young people aged 14 to 17, at 11.6% for the week of November 22nd – the most recent week for which we have the most complete data.
- That's more than 2% higher than the percent positivity for the next highest group – 18 to 23 year olds, at 9%.



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- I see this as a reflection of the wide spread of COVID-19 at this point in the resurgence and an indicator of just how easily this virus transmits from person-to-person.
- For some time, Toronto's "R number," the effective reproduction rate, has also been on our dashboard.
- Today it is 1.1 – and this means that new cases result from each new case that is confirmed.
- Below 1, it's the opposite.
- So an optimist would say that we are fortunate to be so close to the position that we can turn these numbers around.
- A pessimist will say we're on the wrong side of where we want to be and – if not heading in the wrong direction, at least stalled.
- These two things can be true at once.
- You will also find on the dashboard our 7-day moving average for new COVID-19 cases, which today is 506.
- This time last week the 7-day moving average was 454 new cases.
- A week before that it was 418.
- Five of the nine days this month have seen case counts exceed 600, typically in the mid-600s.
- One day saw 761 cases.
- We are a little more than 2 weeks into the 28 day restrictions designated for Toronto by the Province.

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- That the daily case counts may be settling suggests the early results of the restrictions are emerging.
- But what is clear today is that case counts in the mid-500s or into the 600s on any given day are in no way a good thing.
- Additionally, we are continuing to see new hospitalizations and so bed occupancy in hospitals can be expected to rise for at least a few more weeks.
- This puts more pressure on the health care system, both to provide care for COVID infections and to provide care for anyone else who needs it, whether for other physical or mental health needs.
- It is important to remember that illness that results from a COVID-19 infection cannot be predicted.
- It is likely to be a mild illness in most people, but it is not guaranteed.
- It may spread from a person with mild illness to another who will suffer severely and possibly even die.
- There are many variables, best measured in trends over time rather than day by day, and it takes time for trends to emerge.
- For now, and for the foreseeable future, we have to live with what we do know: that COVID-19 is spreading widely in Toronto while we are in the holiday season.
- These levels of infection clearly indicate that we must be on high alert and that we are best to follow the provincial guidance and celebrate this month just with the people we live with.
- Hanukkah begins tomorrow night and continues until December 18th.
- A week later is Christmas Day.



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- While the Jewish and Christian faiths probably touch the widest number of Torontonians, December is a high point of the year for Toronto's many cultures, faiths and families.
- It's hard to break with tradition even once, but the best and safest decision for those we love is to break with it, just this once.
- In protecting ourselves, we also protect the people who matter to us most.
- So please, stay home as much as you can.
- Please keep the people at home limited to the people who live there, and please apply this limit to your celebrations this year.
- When you can't stay home, stay safe. Keep a good distance, wear your mask and wash your hands.
- It was put to me the other day that this year, the spirit of the season will be seen less in what we do and more in what we don't do.
- Today, as stated by the Mayor just now, Health Canada approved the Pfizer vaccine for use in this country.
- We are also seeing encouraging news elsewhere in the world, with vaccination now underway in the United Kingdom.
- The momentum is finally, but slowly, beginning to favour us and not the virus. But there is a long way to go.
- We must not lose sight of the current risk and threat of COVID-19 infection.
- Vaccines are emerging as part of the solution – but they are still months from providing the solution.



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- There has never been a time in the pandemic where it is more important to limit as much as possible our contact with others and to focus on what's in front of us – so we can get through it to better days ahead.
- There is a real risk January could be extremely difficult for us in terms of COVID-19 related illness, if we gather together as usual this month.
- However, if we make up our minds to celebrate differently and to keep apart rather than to gather together, it is entirely possible to limit the degree to which COVID-19 will continue to spread.

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Media contact: Lenore Bromley, Toronto Public Health, 416-338-7974,
Lenore.Bromley@toronto.ca